

HASSAN

14 YEARS OLD

“THEY CREATE A HUMAN SHIELD OF CHILDREN. I SAW THIS WITH MY OWN EYES.”

I was at a funeral when I first heard the rocket that caused a massacre. I think it was targeting the funeral. My cousin and my uncle died that day.

Dead bodies along with injured people were scattered on the ground. I found body parts all over each other; and when we reached the mosque we found tens and tens of dead bodies there. We started to rescue people in need.

Dogs were eating the dead bodies for two days after the massacre. There were tons of people in the mosques too. They were dead, all of them. I was afraid, of course I was afraid.

I was devastated. I hated my life, and I hated myself. I lost my uncle and my cousin. Me and my cousin used to do everything together, and I lost him – my cousin who used to stand always by my side.

My house was burnt down. Everything was gone. I wanted to run in, but I couldn't – it was still too hot. I looked around and everyone was so devastated, no-one could look at each other.

The children in Syria need help. They need help because they are being tortured, shelled, shot at. They take children and put them in front of them. They create a human shield of children. They know that the people in the town will not shoot their own children. I saw this with my own eyes.

I want children in Syria to escape. They should run away so they don't die in the shelling.

What do I remember of Syria? I remember that whenever shelling took place we ran to a shelter. Inside, children shouted and wept a lot, they were so afraid. I remember that so many children were being tortured.

Because of what is happening in Syria we don't play any more. I miss my house. I miss my neighbourhood. I miss playing football.

I ask the leaders all around the world to save the children in Syria, save them from all the shelling. Children need medicine. We need clothes, and food. Every child should play and be happy. I am worried about the future. What will happen to us? Where will we go?

UNTOLD ATROCITIES: THE STORIES OF SYRIA'S CHILDREN



Hassan is 14 years old and lives with his family in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. He witnessed the aftermath of a massacre in Syria. He now lives with his parents and brothers in one tent in the refugee camp.

KHALID

15 YEARS OLD

“THEY HUNG ME UP FROM THE CEILING BY MY WRISTS, WITH MY FEET OFF THE GROUND. THEN I WAS BEATEN.”

I left Syria because of the constant bombardment, the constant shelling, and the torture. The children are all terrified, they don't understand what's happening.

I was arrested. See these marks? My hands were tied with plastic cord. They were tied so tightly. Children were with me in the cell and their hands were tied in the same way. We'd beg them to untie us, but they would tie the cord tighter.

Some men came to our village. I tried to escape, but they took me to jail. Except it wasn't a jail – it was my old school.

It's ironic – they took me there to torture me, in the same place I used to go to school to learn. My father was actually the principal there. They had taken over the school and made it into a torture centre.

When I realised that was where we were going, I was so sad, I wanted to cry.

I was kept there for ten days. For the first two days, we were forced to stand upright. I was blindfolded and my hands were tied with plastic cord. I still have the scars.

I was terrified. More than 100 of us were kept in a room in the school. One boy was only 12. He was kept in prison for five days. His hands were tied behind him, like me. I remember thinking, “What can he have done? He's a 12-year-old boy.”

After two days I was taken out of the room to be interrogated. I hadn't eaten anything or drunk any water, and I was extremely weak. They hung me up from the ceiling by my wrists, with my feet off the ground, then I was beaten. They wanted us to speak, to confess to something.

Most people only last an hour before they pass out. If you were hung up like that for more than two hours, you'd die.

I passed out. I passed out from the severe pain of hanging like that, and from the beating. They took me down and threw cold water on my face to wake me up. Then they took turns stubbing out their cigarettes on me. Here, I have these scars.

UNTOLD ATROCITIES: THE STORIES OF SYRIA'S CHILDREN

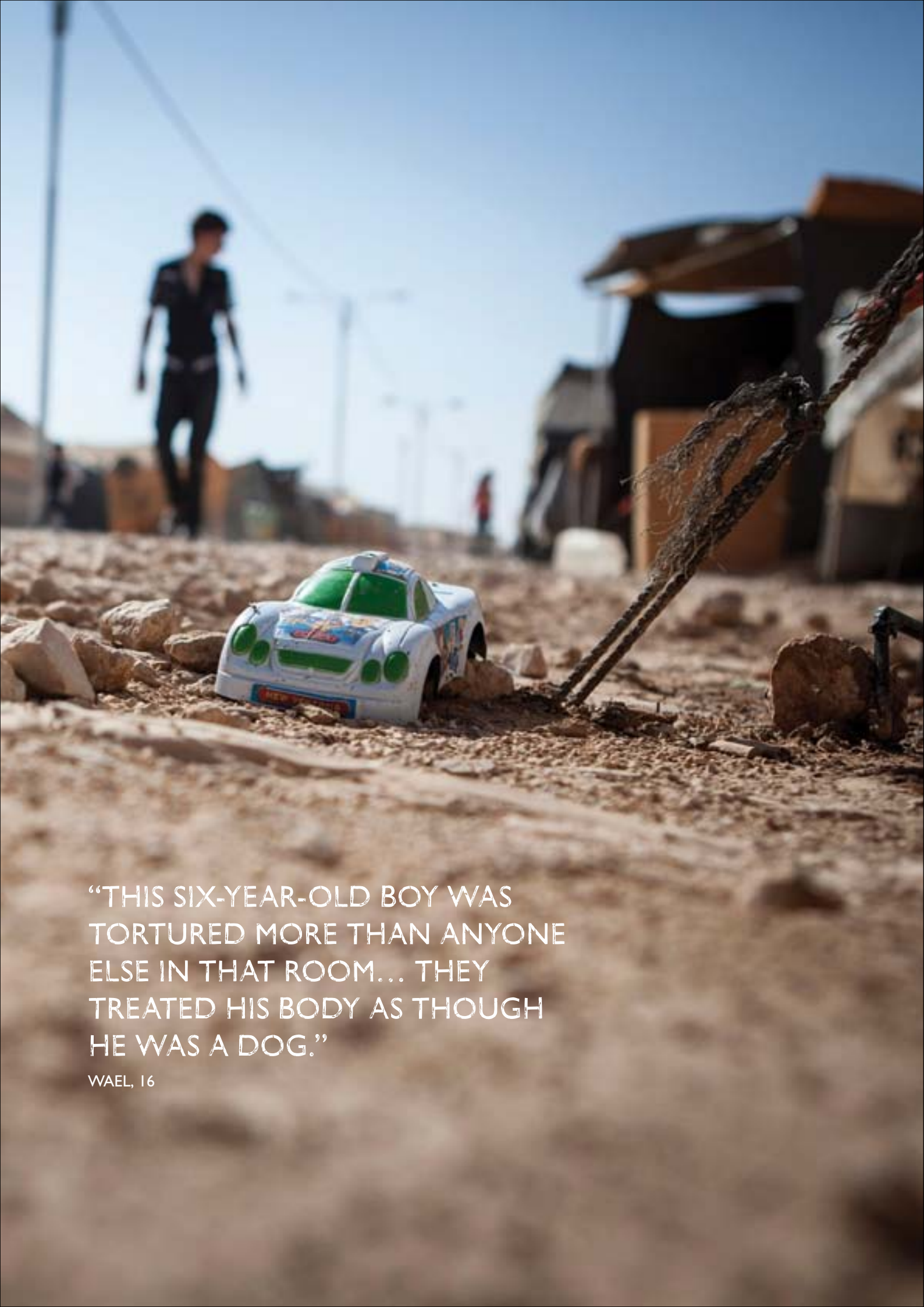
The 12-year-old boy who was with me was hung up too, and had cigarette burns on him. I saw it with my own eyes. Some other people had electricity used on them. I didn't. I don't know why them and not me. I don't think there was a reason – it depended what mood these men were in. They showed no sympathy, no mercy. There were maybe around 70 of them, but I can't be sure.

It's not unusual to see a school used in this way. They've used everything – schools, clinics. The place we went to get medicine from is now used for torture. I was so terrified of that place. I still am.

Another thing they do is to use children to protect themselves. They know we can't shoot our own children, so they put the children in front – so they're a human shield – and march into our villages. It's terrifying for the children. Many of them die.

“THEY HAD TAKEN OVER THE SCHOOL AND MADE IT INTO A TORTURE CENTRE.”





“THIS SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS TORTURED MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THAT ROOM... THEY TREATED HIS BODY AS THOUGH HE WAS A DOG.”

WAEI, 16

WAEI

16 YEARS OLD

“I HAVE SEEN CHILDREN SLAUGHTERED. I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE OK AGAIN.”

I've been here in Za'atari for a month now. Why did I leave? What a question. There's no one left in Syria.

At the beginning we could just about survive. We would go to the shelter, we would hide, and we would live. But now they're using different weapons. Before, the shelters were safe, but now the weapons destroy even those in the basements of houses. I couldn't stand what was happening: the shelling, the destruction, the torture.

At my home in Syria, we dug a hole in the garden to hide in. It was only big enough for three people to crouch in, but whenever we knew that violence was coming, I would climb in there with my brothers. My mother would lead us in and then cover it over with corrugated iron, and throw sand over the top. And we would wait, sometimes for hours.

The last time I was in there it was from 7am to 5pm. It was terrifying – I was so worried that they would find us and kill me and my two brothers. We'd hide in the hole when armed men were walking the streets, and in the basement when shelling happened. The shelling was almost daily. We'd use the hole at least once a week, often on Thursdays. Thursdays are a big day for massacres and crackdowns because prayers on a Friday can be a trigger for protest.

Once, I was arrested along with hundreds of other people. They separated out the children and I was the oldest at 16. I can't tell you how many there were, but there were many. We were forced into a small cell together. There was nowhere to go – there wasn't even a toilet, just a hole in the floor.

There was a group of small children with us whose parents were 'wanted'. There were perhaps 13 children in total. They weren't allowed food or water. When it was time for us to eat, their group was surrounded by armed men who stopped anyone giving them food. These children were too weak to even cry. They just lay on the floor.

They were also subjected to repeated beating with sticks, worse than us. I knew a boy called Ala'a. He was part of that group. He was only six years old. He didn't understand what was happening. His dad was told that his child would die unless he gave himself up. I'd say that this six-year-old boy was tortured more than anyone else in that room. He wasn't given food or water for three days, and he was so weak he used to faint all the time. He was beaten regularly. I watched him die. He only survived for three days and then he simply died. He was terrified all the time. They treated his body as though he was a dog.